

OPPOSITION TO SOVIET SCHEMES

Seyyid Zia was not able to rally around himself all opposition against Soviet influence.

THE TRIBES

One-fourth of the Iranian population still lives in a state of tribal nomadism. The exertion of the central government's authority over these tribes has been a chronically difficult problem. Shah Reza managed, with his ruthless determination, to make them at least outwardly obedient to the government. Yet despite his determined policy, the basic social structure of the tribes remained unchanged: they were not entirely deprived of arms. His regime's collapse permitted the tribal chieftains to reassert their position. The defeat of Iranian armies at the hands of the Russians and the British in 1941 allowed the tribesmen to buy or capture substantial quantities of arms and munitions from the demoralized Iranian units. Hidden weapons were also recovered from the caches, and thus by 1942 the tribes re-emerged as a powerful force that no government and no foreign power in Iran could ignore.

In time of peace the survival of tribal structure obviously provided an impediment to the progress and modernization of Iran and as such constituted a source of serious weakness. But in time of stress the tribes could be regarded as a source of national strength. The tribal social structure was, despite all attempts to destroy it, stronger and more durable than the official fabric of the Iranian state. In the chaos, anarchy, and uncertainty that has characterized Iran since 1941, the tribes have remained relatively untouched by the general collapse and in some measure could be relied upon as a factor of

stability.

Such a statement gives a somewhat oversimplified picture. In reality, despite their basic "stability," the tribes contributed in no small degree to the general confusion and disorder. Their clan-nish narrow-mindedness, tribal rather than national loyalties, greed, and readiness to resort to violence were the essential factors in this respect.

Their stabilizing influence could be felt on a local provincial scale rather than on a national scale. In other words, nothing or little